

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0328

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 0324

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, GOV AC

SUBJECT: ANTIGUA--FIRST GLANCE AT THE NEW GOVERNMENT

REF BRIDGETOWN 0316

1. THE ANGIGUA LABOUR PARTY'S VICTORY OVER THE PROGRESSIVE LABOR MOVEMENT HAS BEEN RESOUNDING. ALP HAVE WON 10 OF THE SEATS IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, WHILE THE PLM HAS BEEN- REDUCED XROM 13 TO 5. OF THE OTHER TWO SEATS, ONE--FOR THE BARBUDA CONSITUENECY-- WENT TO AN INDEPDENT, CLAUDE EARL-FRANCIS, WHO ADVOCATES SECESSION FOR THE SMALLER ISLAND, AND THE OTHER, ST. PHILLIP SOUTH, RESULTED IN A TIE BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES AND WILL HAVE TO BE DECIDED IN A BY-ELECTION. INTERESTINGLY, THE PLM ACTUALLY BEAT THE ALP IN THE POPULAR VOTE, 12,232 TO 12,065. THE VOTER TURN-OUT WAS AN IMPRESSIVE NINETY PERCENT.

2. FORMER PREMIER WALTER SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL, WHO THEN CALLED UPON THE ALP LEADER AND NOMER PREMIER, VERE C. BIRD, SR., TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. BIRD HAS NOW DIBE SO AND, ACCORDING TO THE LATEST INFORMATION

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WE HAVE, IT WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:

PREMIER VERE C. BIRD, SR.
DEPUTY PREMIER LESTER BRYANT BIRD (THE PREMIER'S SON)
HOME AFFAIRS & LABOR ADOLPHUS FREELAND
FINANCE REUBEN HARRIS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LESTER BRYANT BIRD
AGRICULTURE JOHN ST. LUCE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
 AND LEGAL AFFAIRS C.O.R. PHILLIPS, Q.C.
PUBLIC WORKS AND
TOURISM ERNEST WILLIAMS
CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND
 EDUCATION JAMES MEYERS
INFORMATION AND
 PUBLIC RELATIONS PETER HILAIRE
WITHOUT PORTFOLIO CHRISTOPHER O'MARD
WITHOUT PORTFOLIO LIONEL ALEXANDER HURST
3. THE CABINET CONTAINS SEVERAL OLD PARTY STALWARTS-- HURST,
WILLIAMS, HARRIS, ST. LUCE, BIRD'S SON, LESTER, AS DEPUTY
PREMIER AND MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS THE MAN TO
WATCH IN THIS LINE-UP. AT THE US EMBASSY IN BRIDGETOWN
LAST DECEMBER, WHEN ASKED ABOUT REPORTS THAT HE ASPIRED TO
BECOME PREMIER, LESTER OBSERVED THAT THE OLD (MEANING HIS
FATHER) SHOULD NOT TOO READILY BE CAST ASIDE, FOR THEY HAD
MUCH TO OFFER IN EXPERIENCE...BUT THEN FATHER WAS 66 AND
ONE WOULD EXPECT THAT HE WOULD RETIRE SOON. HILAIRE (NOW
INFORMATION MINISTER) WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, PREDICED THAT
LESTER WOULD TAKE OVER FROM HIS FATHER AS PREMIER (HE ASSUMED
AN ALP WIN, OF COURSE) BEFORE THE FATHER CONSTITUTIONALLY HAD
TO STAND FOR RE-ELECTION. YOUNG BIRD BEAMED. (HILAIRE, SON
OF A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF THE AMBASSADOR, HAS CARRIED ON AN
INFORMAL LIAISON BETWEEN EMBASSY AND ALP FOR SOME TIME.)

4. LESTER BRYANT BIRD, NEW YORK-BORN 38 TOMORROW (FEB 21)
IS A FORCEFUL INDIVIDUAL OF NEW YORK ACCULTURALIZATION. HE WILL
BE NO MERE SON OF HIS FATHER BUT RATHER AN EFFECTIVE PARTY AND
GOVERNMENT LEADER. HILAIRE, NEWSMAN, BROADCASTER, IS TO BE HIS
PROPAGANDIST, APPARENTLY. HE ALSO HAS MANY TIES WITH NEW YORK.

WHILE AT THE EMBASSY, LESTER BIRD SPOKE IN GENERALITIES ABOUT
THE NEED FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ANTIGUA AND OF THE PLM
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FAILURE TO BRING IT ABOUT. (HE WAS HERE TO ASCERTAIN IF HE
WAS STILL A US CITIZEN; APPARENTLY, HE FEARED THAT, IF HE
WERE, IT COULD HAVE BEEN USED AGAINST HIM BY THE OPPOSITION.
HIS CITIZENSHIP STATUS IS, IN FACT, UNCLEAR.)
BRITTON

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